1: Gillin E-5 (1932-33)1936 SR9 Carib SR9

776 coals, which enables human beings to locate the epos in the night time. There is little evidence to show that in the Barama country the epos are associated with natural species or features of the environment in the same way in which, for instance, the tree spirits are. They seem to be free spirits of the bush, bent for the most part upon mischief. And from the point of view of holiness, they seem to occupy the lowest rank in the order of Carib supernatural beings. They alone can be seen and conversed with by laymen, and their nearness to ordinary mortals decreases the amount of respect paid to them in comparison with other spirits. A man may match his wits with an epo with a good chance of emerging the winner. As illustrated in Myths 7 and 8, men may sometimes play very uncomfortable tricks upon them. Thus the epos are the clowns of the Carib pantheon, spirits with whom men may carry on a good-natured, though serious, competition in the bush.

Certain other supernatural forces remain to be discussed later under the head of magic.

● 775 **Ghosts and Death Customs.** In addition to the spirits described above, which lead an independent existence, a second class of supernatural beings is concerned to a certain degree in the affairs of mortal men, namely the ghosts of human beings.

764 322 When an individual has died the body is dressed in the person's best raiment and ornaments. A coffin is made of wood. Informants agree that the use of a wooden coffin is an ancient custom and that it has not been introduced by missionaries or other outsiders.[1] The coffin is most often made of upaiya wood (unidentified). [824] Some informants say that upaiya wood is used exclusively for this purpose, and that coffins are made of no other. Others say that any wood or an old korial may be used. In cases where the coffin is made especially for the purpose, that is, when an old korial is not used, it is made of a tree trunk hollowed by the same process used in making a korial or a cassiri barrel. It is provided with a lid of wood, and the inside is lined with fresh leaves. A grave three to four feet deep is dug in the floor of the house occupied by the deceased (grave: munano). 764 Burial takes place usually within twenty-four hours after death, although in some cases it is postponed until the second day. In former times, it is said, the sur-

[1] Two negro prospectors who died during my stay in the area were buried in shallow graves without coffins.

765 Crime and Punishment, to prevent the kanaimas from drinking the fluids of decay from the corpse.

• 775 The Caribs have very vague ideas as to the eventual fate of the ghost. They believe, however, that for some time after it haunts the place of its death. Ghosts here, as among ourselves, are believed to be invisible under ordinary circumstances, although there are occasional individuals who, when passing near a house of death, claim to have seen the form of the dead person working about the house as in life. It is because of the fact that the ghost continues to inhabit the house which it used during life that the survivors desert the house and clearing. The general attitude assumes that mortals have sufficient troubles in this life without being annoyed by the attentions of ghosts, which, it is said, often become irritated at the necessity of sharing a dwelling with the living. Especially if a living person unwittingly does something to displease a ghost, the latter will persecute him, even pursuing him to his new dwelling. Living persons often complain that ghosts are tickling them, pinching them, or causing other uncomfortable sensations. These persecutions most often occur at night, and to an outsider it appears that many an ant or flea bite has been mistaken by a superstitious Carib for a ghostly pinching. Of course, it is believed that ghosts are always invisible when making mortals uncomfortable.

775 484 Although a ghost will become irritated with a living person if the latter stays in his house, it is permissible for a weary traveller to pass the night in a deserted dwelling in case of necessity, provided the intruder speaks to the ghost and explains why he is trespassing. The intruder repeats the following phrase. "Amaronye yedome wawnekusewa." While a human being may thus speak to a ghost, the latter never answers. Several informants spoke of having spent the night in deserted houses and being kept awake by the ghostly footsteps of the deceased owner, who insisted on moving about all night long. It is also dangerous to speak of a dead person, his appearance, personality, or former activities, for fear of arousing the displeasure of the ghost. Likewise, interference of any kind with the house or clearing in which it lives arouses the ire of a ghost.

775 Naturally, no mortal wishes to have any more dealings with ghosts than are necessary. It is said that sometimes thorns are

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put in the feet of a corpse to prevent its ghost from walking. 775
Another method is to cover the face of the corpse with brush, which itches badly and also prevents the ghost from seeing. If one is continually troubled by visitations of a ghost, he may burn a certain moss (piemanotu), which looks like long black hair, and cover his face with ashes. Thus disguised, one is unrecognizable to ghosts, although the disguise, if long continued, is inconvenient and uncomfortable.

Some of the informants say that the ghosts do not eat regularly, that they eat only what is provided for them by mortals. Others say that after a certain period they do not require food. That there is considerable uncertainty concerning the alimentary requirements of the ghosts seems to show that informants had not given the subject much thought previously, and that the beliefs are not highly elaborated. Certain it is, however, that protracted offerings of food to ghosts are not made by the living, although logically it would seem that some such mollification would protect the living from some of the persecutions of which they complain. In fact, however, much of the irritability of ghosts is laid to causes over which mortals have no control, for it is believed that the personality lives on after death. That is to say, that an irascible individual will be represented after death by an irascible ghost, whereas an amiable person will continue after death as an amiable ghost.

The larger activities of ghosts are also a matter of some uncertainty. What do they do beside their daily task of housekeeping and punishment of trespassers? Some informants had no idea; others affirmed that the ghosts busy themselves by keeping in touch with the affairs of men. One informant, for instance, expects to be able to keep advised of the activities of his relatives after his death. If his daughter is married after his death, he will know about it; but he will be unable to interfere if the marriage displeases him.

Carib ideas concerning the after life have not been carried to any logical conclusion. The ultimate disposition or location of the ghost has not been thought out. It is certain that there is no conception of a general place of meeting for all ghosts. No one expects after his own death to meet those who have died previously. There is no heaven, no happy hunting ground — nothing.

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775 And when questioned the Caribs reply with answers which show that the idea has never occurred to them, nor do they consider it a matter of any importance. Intercourse between ghosts and humans is seen to be entirely negative from the human point of view; the ghost minds its own business and contacts mortals only when they intrude upon its privacy. It keeps in touch with the affairs of mortals, but exerts no positive influence over them, either on its own initiative or on appeal from living persons. It haunts its last mortal abode and the minds of the survivors, but as time goes on its house tumbles down and its clearing is obliterated by the forest, while during the same time its memory gradually fades from the minds of mortals, until, both processes being complete, the luckless ghost disappears into limbo.

761 185 The dead thus play a relatively small part in Carib life. A living man can look forward to no immortality after death, he can neither lead an independent existence in some spiritual paradise, nor does he live on as an individual in the minds or culture of his descendents. The dead are quickly and decisively cut off from the life of their community, and there is a distinct feeling among the living that traffic with them is definitely not desired. The practice of abandoning the place of death (erasing from the consciousness of the living the locality which would serve to keep green the memory of the departed) and the tabu upon speaking of the dead are mechanisms highly adapted to the purpose of eliminating the dead from the social life of the group. I believe that the whole complex of attitudes concerning the dead which we have described is an important factor in explaining the looseness of the Carib culture. At least it is consistent with the individualism which is so strong a feature of the culture. On the one hand, there is no motivation for continuing the ideals of outstanding persons, for there is no day of reckoning when those now living will meet the ancestors face to face for an accounting, nor are the forerunners able to interfere in any positive way with the social life of the living! Thus the group is bound in no way to a set of traditions, ideals, or formulae evolved by its forerunners; it has no responsibility to the latter to continue what they have done. And, as has been pointed out, the stage is set for forgetting as soon as possible the works of the ancestors. On the other hand, a mortal man has only this life to lead. Quite apart from ethical considerations,

175 628 Upper Barama seem to have been more frequent than contacts among the Carib settlements in the upper section of the Upper Barama. However, it is also apparent that the most immediate external contacts each group of settlements had were with each other.

In 1932-33, the frequency of contacts seems to have been relative to distance. That is, no specialized settlements are reported in respect to seasonal or other activities. All Carib settlements seem 175 361 to have been much alike in their dependence on the rain forest. The [82] bush resources relied upon include predominantly territorial animals and widely dispersed plant species. Desirable land for cultivation, a mixture of sand and clay on a hillside in close proximity to a permanent stream, was limited (Gillin 1936:14). As a consequence, settlements are widely scattered. Figure 7 depicts the dispersed nature of Carib settlements in the Upper Barama River area for this earlier time period. Realignments would occur with the relocation of settlements. After a number of years, a move might be made to more advantageous hunting and gathering and more fertile soil. Other cultural practices as well promoted this scattered, shifting pattern [586] of settlement. A divorce tended to result in the relocation of [572] individuals (Gillin 1936:79-80): the rupture of male friendships, in [775] the relocation of households (1936:136). Also, due to a belief in [768] the malevolent nature of a person's spirit, a clearing would be abandoned in the event of a death (Gillin 1936:165).

175 *177 361 Later, with the availability of external resources, settlements were no longer scattered solely along the Barama River corridor. Over time, a centralization of settlements developed in relationship

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